



**Department of Housing and Community Development  
Ward 4 Check-In Meeting  
May 28, 2015**

**Coolidge Senior High School  
6315 5th Street, NW  
Washington, DC**

*This report details key information regarding the May 28, 2015 Check-in Meeting for Ward 4. The DC Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD) hosted this event.*



## Event Overview

Starting April 8, 2015, the Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD) held eight community Check-In events throughout the District of Columbia. These public events were intended to update residents, business owners, and community stakeholders on DHCD's current and future projects, and attendees were encouraged to share their thoughts and concerns with DHCD. There were eight sessions, one in each ward. This report concerns the event in Ward 4, which was the fifth for this series.

The DHCD team promoted this event in several ways, including flyers, posters, social media, and postal mailings. DHCD Director Polly Donaldson gave remarks detailing interagency collaboration, new DHCD initiatives, and general agency updates. DHCD staff briefed attendees on current and future projects in their community. Participants then engaged in discussions on specific issue areas. Multiple representatives from DHCD were present to provide context, present on their particular program areas or areas of responsibility, answer questions, and connect with community leaders.

Participant survey results can be found in Appendix A. The scribes' records and raw conversation notes can be found in Appendix B. Audience feedback notes in the Discussion Analysis section are edited for clarity, but generally follow the trajectory of emerging themes from the conversation.

## Discussion Analysis

Following an informational session with DHCD leadership and staff, event attendees gathered in small groups to discuss issues facing their community. The groups generated significant feedback on the issues they saw in Ward 4 and the solutions they believe DHCD should pursue. Three themes emerged during the meeting: affordability, communication, and community services. These themes are reflected in the following summary.

### Affordability

Event attendees expressed concerns about affordability and retaining affordable housing units. Housing for seniors and social services that allow seniors to age in place were strongly supported by participants. Participants also pushed for different types of affordable housing programs, such as co-operatives and supporting the purchase of affordable single-family homes.

#### Audience Feedback

- Senior housing is the top priority.
- How can we improve the ability of seniors to age in place?
- There should be technical assistance for limited equity co-ops that maintain housing affordability, especially for seniors.
- There is a very clear line between affordable housing and low-income housing, and low-income housing is vital for seniors who are not earning an income.

- The Home Purchase Assistance Program that’s happening in Ward 1 is also needed in Ward 4. We need to help people purchase their home. [This feedback may indicate need for greater education regarding HPAP, which is a citywide program.]

## **Communication**

Participants expressed frustration over a perceived lack of communication about development plans in their neighborhood, as well as lack of communication around the Ward 4 Check-in event itself. There were several questions about the re-development of the Walter Reed complex and the timeline for a decision.

### Audience Feedback

- What is the status of the development plans at Walter Reed? What are the plans to communicate this to the neighborhood, or involve the neighbors in the planning process?
- There should be increased communication about community events and plans. Information needs to be shared with a variety of networks and community-based organizations.
- Communication with tenants should be improved. How do tenants find out what is happening in their area?
- What happens to renters when buildings change hands? The neighbors are not told, and this hurts the community.
- Information about planned development is communicated only through email, which leaves out many low-income people. Communication should bridge the digital divide and should consist of efforts beyond email. Otherwise, this population is left out.

## **Community Services**

Attendees expressed discontent about the level of services in their community, focusing on the lack of coordination between city agencies and how that hurts their community. There was significant feedback that gaps in constituent services and enforcement powers create blight and deter development.

### Audience Feedback

- The District needs to be better about enforcing the Tenant Opportunity to Purchase Act (TOPA). It’s been on the books for a while, but it has taken lower priority when different administrations come into office. Community-based organizations (CBOs) can play a significant role in protecting tenants’ rights.
- There’s a gap between the powers of DHCD, the Department of Consumer and Regulatory Affairs (DCRA), and other housing agencies in the District. This gap benefits private apartment owners who do not maintain their properties very well, hurting their tenants and the surrounding area.
- There should be better constituent services, both by city agencies and by City Council members, to serve the community.



## Action Items

DHCD will employ feedback from residents and stakeholders to guide its policy priority areas and communication procedures to better serve the community through a dialogue and process that benefits everyone in the District. There were several lessons learned from this event that could serve upcoming events and future work with DC residents:

1. DHCD could increase its partnerships with community-based organizations in each ward to promote the check-in events, as well as post event flyers in prominent places in given neighborhoods. DHCD has made this effort for its community meetings in the past, and there is space to increase this engagement.
2. Event participants asked several questions about contacting their elected representatives and becoming involved in the decision-making process. DCHD could provide information at its events about how to contact local and at-large council members, as well as contact information for local Advisory Neighborhood Commission members. DHCD could also provide information for other city agencies that provide neighborhood services, such as the Office of Planning and the DC Housing Authority.
3. At these events, DCHD could provide information about neighborhood social services available to senior citizens and underserved populations. Many people asked for this information, and DHCD could provide a public service by providing it in their meeting materials.

## Appendix A: Survey Results

Participants were surveyed about their priorities and how they heard about the event. Those results are below.

| How familiar are you with DHCD services and programs? |                |                |
|---|----------------|----------------|
| Response  | # of Responses | % of Responses |
| Very familiar   | 1              | 9%             |
| Familiar  | 0              | 0%             |
| Somewhat Familiar                                     | 3              | 27%            |
| Not Familiar  | 7              | 63%            |

| Most to least important priorities in your community<br>(1=Most important; 6=Least important) |                                 |                 |
|---|---------------------------------|-----------------|
| Issue   | Responses                       | Average Ranking |
| Redeveloping or restoring abandoned buildings   | 2, 1, 5, 1, 2, 5, 5, 3          | 3               |
| Access to storefront façade improvement and small business technical assistance               | 3, 4, 2, 6, 5, 3, 6, 6, 5       | 4.44            |
| Access to first-time home-buyer incentives  | 6, 1, 1, 3, 2, 6, 3, 4, 5       | 3.44            |
| Housing that accommodates the needs of the elderly  | 5, 2, 3, 1, 3, 4, 6, 4, 1, 1    | 3.0             |
| Access to affordable housing for purchase (single-family and multi-family)                    | 4, 2, 1, 4, 1, 3, 1, 2, 2, 5    | 2.5             |
| Access to affordable rental housing   | 1, 1, 1, 1, 1, 2, 4, 5, 4, 3, 5 | 2.5             |

| How do you prefer to hear about news, events, and other opportunities from DHCD? |                |                |
|--|----------------|----------------|
| Response   | # of Responses | % of Responses |
| Postal Mail  | 2              | 12.5%          |
| E-mail   | 10             | 62.5%          |
| DHCD's Website   | 1              | 6.25%          |
| In-person meetings   | 3              | 18.75%         |
| Social media   | 0              | 0%             |



| <b>How did you hear about the community meeting?</b> |  |                       |
|--|--|-----------------------|
| <b>Response</b>                                      | <b># of Responses</b>                  | <b>% of Responses</b> |
| Email  | 5                                      | 41.66%                |
| A friend or relative                                 | 0                                      | 0%                    |
| Social media   | 1                                      | 8.33%                 |
| Flyer or poster                                      | 2                                      | 16.66%                |
| Other  | 3 (newspaper)<br>1 (Takoma Rec Center) | 33.33%                |

| <b>What is your preferred social media network?</b> |                       |                       |
|---|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| <b>Response</b>                                     | <b># of Responses</b> | <b>% of Responses</b> |
| Facebook  | 1                     | 33%                   |
| Twitter   | 2                     | 67%                   |
| Instagram   | 0                     | 0%                    |
| Other   | 0                     | 0%                    |

## Appendix B: Notes

*The information below is a compilation of scribe and facilitator raw notes from the large and small group discussions.*

### Home Ownership

- Does DHCD provide solar panels for homes?
- What's the status of the moratorium on foreclosures? How are renters and homeowners protected against foreclosure?
- Is there a state tax credit for home ownership?
- Is there a pipeline report that breaks down housing by ward?
- The Home Purchase Assistance Program that's happening in Ward 1 is also needed in Ward 4. We need to help people purchase their home. This could include quarterly seminars/training to teach people about their options.
- Is there any technical assistance for limited equity co-ops that maintain housing affordability, especially for seniors?
- How can we improve the ability of seniors to age in place?
- Senior housing should be the top priority.
- What is the single-family rehab program? How can people get more information and qualify? Are the tax exemptions for this program?

### Community Development

- We need a better integration of retail and community needs. How can we benefit everyone?
- There should be better constituent services, both by city agencies and by City Council members, to serve the community.
- What's the status of the development plans at Walter Reed? What are the plans to communicate this to the neighborhood, or involve the neighbors in the planning process?
- There should be increased communication about community events and plans. Information needs to be shared with a variety of networks and community-based organizations.

- How is the Area Median Income (AMI) level set? Is that amount fair to District residents? Should the AMI level be revised to include only District residents and their income?

### **Housing Development**

- How will the additional funding for the Housing Production Trust Fund be spent? Are there new requirements for this money?
- There's a very clear line between affordable housing and low-income housing, and low-income housing is vital for seniors who are not earning an income. What are the plans for low- or no-income senior housing in Ward 4?

### **Tenants**

- Communication with tenants should be improved. How do tenants find out what's happening in their area?
- What happens to renters when buildings change hands? No one knows.
- Information is communicated only through email, which leaves out many low-income people. Communication should bridge the digital divide, and should consist of efforts beyond email. Otherwise, this population is left out.
- The District needs to be better about enforcing the Tenant Opportunity to Purchase Act (TOPA). It's been on the books for a while, but it has taken lower priority when different administrations come into office. Community-based organizations (CBOs) can play a significant role in protecting tenants' rights.
- There's a gap between the powers of DHCD, the Department of Consumer and Regulatory Affairs (DCRA), and other housing agencies in the District. This gap benefits private apartment owners who don't maintain their properties very well, hurting their tenants and the surrounding area.